AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-13. (canceled)

14. (currently amended) A method of thematically classifying documents, in particular for making up or updating thematic databases for a search engine, the method comprising the following steps:

- manually and/or automatically selecting a sample of documents representative of each theme;

- automatically identifying within the selected documents elements that are characteristic of each theme;

- automatically allocating a coefficient to each identified element, which coefficient is representative of the relevance of said element relative to the corresponding theme;

- downloading documents from a computer network;

- for each downloaded document to be classified, identifying said theme-characterizing elements that are contained in the document for each of the themes, and for each theme corresponding to the elements, using the coefficients allocated to said elements to calculate [[the]] a characteristic value ~~of a characteristic~~ representative of the relevance of that theme for the document, in order to decide whether or not the document

relates to the theme, said <u>theme-characterizing elements</u> identification and calculation steps being performed automatically for each document downloaded from [[a]] <u>the</u> computer network;

    - automatically classifying the downloaded documents as a function of the themes with which they deal; [[and]]

    - automatically storing the documents classified thematically in databases that can be interrogated on the basis of themes contained in a request; <u>and</u>

    <u>- making the databases available to users who interrogate the databases on the basis of themes contained in a request;</u>

    and the step of allocating said coefficient to each identified element comprises the following steps for each theme:

    - automatically calculating [[the]] <u>a</u> frequency of the element in the selected documents relating to the theme;

    - automatically calculating [[the]] <u>a</u> frequency of the element in the selected documents that do not relate to the theme; and

    - automatically calculating the ratio of the calculated frequencies.

    15. (previously presented) A method according to claim 14, further comprising the step of automatically sorting themes in a theme tree structure in decreasing order of coefficients.

16. (currently amended) A method according to claim 14, wherein the step of automatically calculating the characteristic value representative of the relevance of the theme of a document for classification comprises the following steps, for each theme:

- reading the value of the ratio of said frequencies for each theme-representing element extracted from the document;

- multiplying together the values of the ratios as read for the theme-characterizing elements; and

- allocating the result of this multiplication to the characteristic value of said characteristic.

17. (currently amended) A method according to claim 14, wherein it is automatically decided that the document relates to a theme if the characteristic value of said characteristic representative of the relevance of the theme for said document is greater than a threshold value.

18. (previously presented) A method according to claim 17, wherein the threshold value for each theme is automatically determined on the basis of said frequency ratios using the following relationship:

score - $\text{threshold}_{\text{theme}}$ = $(R_{\text{mean}})\text{theme\_n}$

in which:

score - $\text{threshold}_{\text{theme}}$ designates the threshold value;

R_{mean} represents the mean value of the frequency ratios R of the elements of the theme; and

theme_n designates a predetermined number.

19. (previously presented) A method according to claim 17, wherein the threshold value is adjusted manually.

20. (previously presented) A method according to claim 14, wherein the steps of automatically identifying theme-characterizing elements contained in a document and for each theme are performed by means of a hashing table.

21. (previously presented) A method according to claim 14, wherein for each vocabulary element of a request formulated by a user, coefficients are automatically calculated characteristic of the element relative to each known theme, and each element is associated with the corresponding themes and coefficients, so that said coefficients reach a minimum value.

22. (currently amended) A module for thematically classifying documents, in particular for a search engine, the module comprising a central processor unit having means for comparing elements extracted from each document with elements characteristic of various themes, each element being allocated a coefficient representative of the relevance of said element for a corresponding theme, and means for calculating [[the]] a characteristic value ~~of at least one characteristic~~ representative of the relevance of a theme for the document on the basis of the coefficients of said characteristic elements that the document contains, in order to decide whether or not the document relates to said theme, said central unit being connected to means for storing documents classified by theme that can be

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interrogated on the basis of themes contained in a request, and the module has means for calculating [[the]] a frequency of the element in the selected documents relating to the theme, means for calculating [[the]] a frequency of the element in the selected documents that do not relate to the theme, and means for calculating the ratio between the calculated frequencies.

23. (currently amended) A method of ~~The use of a module for thematically~~ classifying documents comprising the steps of providing the module of ~~according to~~ claim 22, and using said module to determine which themes are contained in a request formulated by a user.

24. (currently amended) A method of ~~The use of a module for~~ thematically classifying documents comprising the steps of providing the module of ~~according to~~ claim 22, using said module for determining which themes are contained in pages downloaded from a computer network or in a request formulated by a user, and ~~for~~ filtering downloaded documents to ban consultation of pages relating to one or more predetermined themes.

25. (currently amended) A method of ~~The use of a module for~~ thematically classifying documents comprising the steps of providing the module of ~~according to~~ claim 22, using said module to determine which themes are contained in a request formulated by a user, and ~~for~~ generating user profiles on the basis of the themes to which the request relates.

26. (previously presented) A search engine for documents on a computer network, the engine comprising an indexing module for creating and updating thematic databases on the basis of documents downloaded from the computer network, and a module for interrogating thematic databases adapted to supply the references of documents corresponding to a request that has been input thereto, the search engine further comprising a thematic classification module according to claim 22 associated with the indexing module.